

Ralph G. Laycock Funeral Address
April 10, 2006

It is truly a privilege to participate in this sacred service honoring the life and work of Ralph G. Laycock. He lived a life of consecrated, joyful service that enabled him to leave this life prepared to continue on the path of happiness. He has been an exemplar, friend, colleague, teacher, and mentor to thousands. His work has influenced and blessed thousands, even millions, more.

Fifty years ago this July, as a high school participant in the two-week Summer Music Clinic at BYU, I first experienced the magic of Ralph Laycock's musicianship. His directness and candor demanded attention. The intensity of his rehearsal techniques and the elegance of his conducting skill were stimulating and energizing. His musical understanding was captivating. He was thoroughly professional.

The past few days have been filled with a rather lengthy review of Ralph's impact on my life. I am grateful for so many things he taught me. Among them are three I wish to speak about today: (1) the principle of chastening, (2) the virtue of diligence, and (3) the value of thorough preparation. Perhaps this will remind you of the things he taught you.

To be chastened is to experience suffering that results in humility and improvement; to be restrained, subdued, or corrected in order to be refined. We read in the twenty-third chapter of Mosiah that "the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith." (Mosiah 23:21) And we are reminded by Mormon (1) "except the Lord doth chasten his people..., they will not remember him" and (2) "he chasten[s] them because he love[s] them." (Helaman 12:3 & 15:3) Further, we are taught in latter-day scripture that those "that will not bear chastisement [are] not worthy of [Christ's] kingdom" and that "those who will not endure chastening...cannot be sanctified." (D&C 138:31 & 101:5) From the beginning, Ralph helped me understand and learn the value of chastening.

During my first term as a freshman, a 6:00 a.m. dress rehearsal was scheduled in the Joseph Smith Auditorium, the morning of the BYU Concert Band's fall concert. Five members of the band were missing at 6:00. Ralph sent section leaders to find four of them and he went after the fifth himself. At 6:05 a.m., I was awakened by a knock on the

door. Jumping from the upper bunk to the door in a single bound, I found myself face to face with – guess who. He simply asked: “Shouldn’t you be in a rehearsal right now.” I mumbled something unintelligible. He said he’d wait for me downstairs in the car. I threw on some clothes, grabbed my trumpet, hurried downstairs, climbed in the car, and rode the two and a half blocks to the rehearsal in complete silence. During the rehearsal that followed Ralph made certain that each of the five latecomers were given the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of the most difficult passages - alone, quite to the delight of the rest of the band! I had been chastened. I have never forgotten the important lesson learned that morning. He never mentioned it again.

In numerous ways, those who experienced Ralph’s rehearsals and performances knew what it was to be chastened. He had high musical standards and wanted others to share them. When performers needed correction, he offered it with directness and precision, sometimes with considerable intensity. I remember a band rehearsal that got out of control. He began to correct the first clarinetist and just wouldn’t let up. (Sometimes that happened!) As Ralph’s criticism and suggestions escalated the clarinetist, frustrated and embarrassed, threatened to leave. Ralph countered by ejecting him from the rehearsal. We were all shocked by the ferocity of the exchange and its outcome...until the door opened again and the clarinetist wheeled in a cart loaded with refreshments. The whole scene had been a setup for a surprise party! And we fell for it!!

Diligence is a constant and earnest effort to accomplish whatever is undertaken. It is to be attentive and persistent. It is to persevere. The Lord has said: “Let every man be diligent in all things.” (D&C 75:29) Ralph Laycock exemplified diligence. During that same freshman year the Concert Band was preparing to perform for the Music Educators National Conference in Los Angeles. There were challenges in the music we were preparing that required diligent practice and the band needed some prodding. He invited the trumpet section into his office, one by one, to play through the most challenging parts. But he didn’t just listen; he demonstrated some of the most difficult passages *on the trumpet*. He made his point. I left his office with a silent commitment to be more diligent, to never let a woodwind player outplay me on trumpet ever again.

To prepare is to put things, or oneself, in readiness. The prophet Alma taught that this life is a preparatory state. (Alma 42:10,13) The Lord has promised, “If ye are

prepared, ye shall not fear.” (D&C 38:30) Ralph Laycock was always prepared. His scores were filled with markings intended to help him remember every detail his thorough preparation uncovered. He was able to reveal the essence of any piece he prepared with confidence and clarity. Beyond that, he was prepared to help performers master the difficult intricacies of a piece through his uniquely creative methods and approaches. He knew what he wanted and he knew how to get it. In this context, recall Nephi’s expression of confidence in the Lord: “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save *he shall prepare a way* for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.” (1 Nephi 3:7, italics added) Ralph not only prepared *himself* to conduct a score, he *prepared a way* for those he taught to accomplish their part. His performers had faith in him because they knew he was prepared to lead them through a process that would result in a successful performance. He always prepared the way in advance.

Ralph Laycock was personally prepared in surprising ways. He didn’t know or accept many limitations. He knew all styles of music and how to play a large number of instruments very well. Jim Mason has shared a story that illustrates this point.

“I remember the fall of 1953 returning from Korea and enrolling at BYU. I had been playing in an army band for the past two years and was eager to resume my study of music. I learned that the university had hired a new band director from Drake University. I signed up for band thinking this would be an easy and relaxing way to get some ensemble credit. It was neither easy nor relaxing! This Mr. Laycock wasn't going to waste a minute of rehearsal time nor was he willing to accept our level of performance.

“His high demands were more than irritating to some of the returning veterans as we rehearsed and prepared ourselves for a tour of Alberta, Canada, which happened to be where Mr. Laycock had grown up. The tour was a success with a much-improved band. Ralph's expectations were beginning to be realized.

“At one of our stops some of the local church members were raising funds for a new church building. Some of us were asked to get a jazz group together and play for a dance. The people would donate money if we would play certain tunes. As the evening progressed, individuals offered a large donation if Mr. Laycock would perform. After shaking his head, the amount kept increasing and his students joined in urging him to play, thinking that jazz wasn't his thing.

Finally, with the promise of an increased donation, he joined us on the stage and to our amazement took a chorus on the clarinet that made us think Artie Shaw or Benny Goodman was part of the group. If this hadn't been humbling enough, he

proceeded to take a chorus on every instrument, which was better than any of us could have done! This resulted in a profound respect--especially from the "old" veterans."

Years ago, while preparing to present a BYU Forum about jazz and jazz improvisation, I needed a fine clarinetist who was capable of demonstrating a number of jazz styles. Ralph agreed to assist. His performance created quite a stir among students and faculty who knew him only as the conductor of the Philharmonic and Chamber orchestras. He was always prepared and willing to perform at a professional level in any circumstance, whenever the opportunity arose. He loved making music in every style.

Ralph had a place for everything and kept everything in its place. Colleagues and students who visited his office just didn't understand his system. Even the custodians were sometimes hesitant to empty his wastebasket for fear it might contain something important that had dropped off his desk. I once went to his office to retrieve a purchase order for a tuba. His daughter Claudia was there. As I asked for the document I glanced at a desk piled high with papers, scores, notes, documents – whatever – and then caught Claudia's eye. We were both a bit anxious. He turned to the desk, looked at the stack of stuff thoughtfully, reached in and under the pile, and pulled out the requested document. He actually knew where things were!

About four years ago, while I was serving as Dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communications, a visionary friend made a multi-million dollar donation to establish the Laycock Center for Creative Collaboration in honor of the larger Laycock family that nurtured and encouraged Ralph's creative nature. It provides substantial support for the kind of collaborative creative work that Ralph loved so much. On numerous occasions since, he has continued to express appreciation for that donor's generosity. I think it significant that the Laycock name is now linked in perpetuity at BYU with creativity and collaboration in the arts.

It has been my good fortune to know and work with Ralph Laycock. He has been a life-long teacher, mentor, colleague and friend. He always treated me with kindness and respect, even during times of chastening. There is so much more that could be shared, but this must suffice for today.

In a recent conversation, Ralph expressed gratitude for his life and loved ones, including all he had taught, served, and performed with over the years. He said he had done all that he really wanted to do in life. He felt very blessed to have enjoyed a rich and productive life. As he spoke I was impressed with his confidence. He had no fear. He was prepared to move on, to enjoy the next phase of an eternal journey. He had no regrets, only a bit of wonderment about the challenges that might be ahead and those who might greet and assist him there.

I am grateful for Ralph's quiet faith in Jesus Christ and his firm testimony of the restored gospel. He was prepared to move on because he really knew how to prepare. He endured the final chastening experience of his life with grace and good humor because he understood the necessity of chastening. His life-long diligence has earned him unique opportunities and blessings where he now resides. Of this I am certain. Of this I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

K. Newell Dayley